

TWO players were sent off and two booked in an Isthmian League game that was packed full of incident and yet lacked any really good football at Loakes Park on Saturday. But apart from surrendering two valuable points, Wycombe Wanderers suffered a double blow in the dismissal of leading scorer Keith Searle and a bad injury to Rob Williams.

Searle received his marching orders for elbowing Leatherhead full back Alan Brazier. The other player sent off was Chris Kelly, for two fouls within the space of two minutes on goalkeeper Kevin O'Brien.

Rob Williams suffered a nasty four inch cut just above the knee after a collision with John Cooper who was later booked. Williams was stretchered off and Wanderers were forced to move centre forward Tony Amos to the full back position.

Two sent off, two booked. It sounds as though the game was a brawl but in fact it was seldom out of the firm hands of referee A. D. Cox (Doddington).

Wycombe made several changes to the side that won 2-1 against St. Albans in mid week. Gerry Olson was dropped for the first time this season and Rob Williams partnered Delaney in the back four. Wycombe aiming for more

Wycombe 1, Leatherhead 2

Report by STUART EARP

mobility in the defence. Holifield stood down in preference to Amos who wore the number nine shirt instead of Searle who switched to inside forward. Johnny Hutchinson played on the wing while Jameson partnered Pritchard in midfield.

Both sides took a long time to settle and the first real chance didn't come until the 18th minute when Barry Webb overran a defence-splitting pass from Pete Lavers. Larry Pritchard replied with a 30-yard drive narrowly wide and Johnny Hutchinson, who was often back to help his defence in the early stages, put two 'left footers' just over.

But any chance of catching goalkeeper Peter Smith with

high crosses in the goalmouth were soon blotted out by the 'keepers' superb handling. However, he had to be on his toes in the 29th minute when a flick shot from Amos almost caught him unawares.

Then came the Williams injury which did much to upset Wycombe's plans. Rob went into a tackle with John Cooper and suffered a cut which necessitated hospital treatment. The injury was caused by a stud which prompted referee Cox to immediately check several Leatherhead players' boots. Substitute Tony Horseman came on with Amos taking over at full back. Ian Rundle switched to centre back.

Leatherhead were quick to take advantage of Wycombe disorganisation and Lavers was only just too high with a well placed lob. Then Kelly beat two men in a clever dribble before sending in a curling drive just wide of the post.

But the shot that caused Kevin O'Brien most trouble in the first half was a high punt from Barry Friend. In the face of a strong sun, Friend sent in a high lob which dropped onto the cross bar with O'Brien struggling.

After the interval Wycombe began to get a grip on the game for the first time. Using the wings to good effect they were desperately unlucky not to go ahead after 52 minutes. A neat flick by Horseman gave Hutchinson a clear route to goal. But as the 'keeper came out his shot was half blocked and rolled slowly towards the line. Full back Brazier was just in time to boot it away to safety.

Leatherhead, at first taken aback by Wanderers enthusiasm, came within inches of breaking the deadlock in the 60th minute. Skinner raced in on Rundle and Amos who took too long in clearing the ball on the edge of the Wycombe penalty area. Rundle was forced to kick the ball back to O'Brien but hit it too strongly, and it sailed over the 'keeper's head and struck the crossbar for a corner.

Two minutes later the incident was forgotten as Wycombe went ahead. Keith Searle brushed aside centre half Reid's challenge and ran on to crack the ball past Smith. The referee looked at his linesman for any signal of a foul but when the flag stayed down, he rightly allowed the goal to stand.

Leatherhead were clearly upset by the decision, thinking

Reid was obstructed. A minute later, Cooper was fortunate to receive just a booking for a foul on Jameson.

Soon afterwards Kelly's name went into the book after a challenge on O'Brien, following a corner. One minute later, Kelly was on his way back to the dressing rooms. Following a Delaney back pass, he again fouled the goalkeeper. Referee Cox had no alternative but to dismiss the player.

The game deteriorated badly after this and after one of several free kicks for obstructing O'Brien a Leatherhead supporter ran onto the field to remonstrate with the referee before being led away.

Then in the 78th minute, Searle was sent off for the second time in his career at Wycombe. He was previously dismissed against Maidenhead two years ago. The incident occurred before a throw in when Searle appeared to elbow Brazier. After consulting his linesman, Searle was given his marching orders, thus reducing both sides to ten men.

All the footballing action was reserved until the last ten minutes and during that time Wycombe had a golden chance to seal the match. But, as has been the case so often this season, the opportunity went begging.

In the 82nd minute Horseman and Hutchinson were left with only Brazier to beat for a clear path to goal after a long ball from Amos. A quick one-two gave 'Bodger' the chance but when faced by Smith, he screwed his shot wide.

Pete Lavers made no such mistake a minute later. A deep cross by Friend went over the Wycombe back line and Lavers, completely unmarked, headed neatly past O'Brien on his goalline.

Time wasting by Webb in the last few minutes emphasised Leatherhead's aim of a point from the champions. But Nobby Skinner and Pete Lavers had other ideas.

One minute into injury time, Leatherhead centre half Dave Reid booted the ball hard upfield to Skinner, whose speed had caused Wycombe problems earlier in the match. Skinner outpaced Rundle and placed the ball wide of O'Brien for a dramatic winner.

WYCOMBE WANDERERS: K. O'Brien, I. Rundle, D. Gamblin, R. Williams (sub A. Horseman 32 mins), J. Delaney, A. Gane, K. Jameson, L. Pritchard, A. Amos, K. Searle, J. Hutchinson.

LEATHERHEAD: P. Smith, B. Davies, A. Brazier, B. Friend, D. Reid, D. Wells, J. Cooper, C. Kelly, P. Lavers, D. Skinner, E. Webb, sub D. Casey (not used).

Referee: A. D. Cox (Doddington)

Half Time: 0-0. Goalscorers: Wycombe: Searle (62); Leatherhead: Lavers (83), Skinner (91). Attendance: 1,506